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**Heather M Busch**

September 21, 2021

The Honorable Rachel P. Kovner  
Judge  
United States District Court  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY

Dear Judge Kovner,

My name is Heather Busch and I currently reside in Massapequa with my domestic partner Kevin as well as my two children, [REDACTED]. Although I was born in Brooklyn, as a child my family moved to Brentwood, Long Island. My Father Bob was a retired police officer and my mother Ann is a registered nurse working in the home healthcare department. I also have two younger sisters Emily and Shannon. My father was retired with a knee injury sustained while on duty and while he at one point worked as a bus driver then an elevator inspector he was mostly a stay at home dad while my mother worked to support our family.

As a child I never lacked for necessities but money was tight at times and I was taught early on about financial responsibility. Going out to dinner or purchasing non necessities was a rarity. I learned to cook, clean, do laundry and help with household repairs. My father and I along with my sisters put a new roof on our home, we dug out and replaced cesspools and repaired countless items around the house. I learned how to gut rooms and put up sheetrock, paint, install flooring, set electric panels and fix minor plumbing issues. Occasionally my father would call in a favor from an old coworker or friend to help with bigger projects but I was always there learning and working along with him. I started working at the mall some time around the age of 15 or 16 with the understanding that half of my earnings would go toward household bills and that I would be responsible for purchasing my own clothing. My parents were tough on me and my siblings. I was told that as the oldest I needed to set the example for my younger sisters.

As a child I wanted to become a police officer, I knew that I wanted to help people and make a difference in the world that I lived in. My father who retired in the mid 90's with an injury was a major influence in this in that I looked up to him and saw that as a police officer I would have the opportunity to achieve my goals. Even after retiring, my father still maintained friendships with many people that he worked with. He was involved with various NYPD retiree groups and attended occasional events hosted by them. I grew up seeing this community of people that cared about each other, even if they had not known each other before and I admired it intensely. Within moments of meeting someone my father would become friends, find at least one person if not more that they knew in common and refer to each other as brother even though they had just met. My father's brother (Uncle Jon who is also my God-father) had worked with him as a transit police officer and I loved listening to them tell funny and occasionally sad stories.

I admired these men that I occasionally would meet at bowling alleys or retirement parties. I was impressed by the things they had done and the stories they would tell. I was surprised at the casualness they used when speaking of violent crimes and wondered if I could ever be that tough and hardened.

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Knowing that the NYPD accepted an associates degree to enter the academy, I went to Suffolk Community College and worked two jobs as a waitress and at a department store to pay my way. My parents insisted that I learn financial responsibility and though they supported me it was expected that as I approached becoming an adult I would contribute to household bills as well as pay for my own expenses where feasible. I understood that a family with three children and one parent collecting disability it was necessary for me to be responsible for myself. My Father drove me into Manhattan to take the entry test for the NYPD when I was about 18 years old. Taking the test very seriously, I had purchased two study guides and read them thoroughly, taking the quizzes and going over them with my father until I felt I was ready.

In early 2009, I got a call from the NYPD that my name was on the list to be hired, and I immediately dropped everything including continuing my college education, and instead entered the NYPD academy that summer. It was still my childhood dream to be an officer in the NYPD and I was so excited to begin the process. I can still remember how anxious I felt, waiting in a line outside the academy building that went around the corner in a hastily purchased business suit as we waited in silence to go in.

To the dismay of both my parents, upon graduating the academy I specifically requested to be placed in public housing. Public housing was known to be dangerous and rife with violent crime as well as difficult to leave once placed. My father and uncle had both been transit cops but I knew that domestic violence was prevalent in NYCHA buildings and I felt that if I wanted to help people this was the path that would best lead to that. During my career as a police officer I was determined to help people, especially those trapped in violent relationships as I had personally experienced myself not long before joining the NYPD. Being a woman in a department where mostly men are employed was not easy. I found myself battling stereotypes and working harder than ever to prove my worth.

Throughout my career I prided myself in going above and beyond, often staying in touch with not only victims of domestic violence but also victims of other crimes. I gave my phone number freely and encouraged them to call me with questions or concerns. In January of 2021 I responded to a call for a dispute at a motel in Queens that was known for frequent violent disputes and interactions with the mentally ill. Upon arrival I quickly realized that the person who was named as the aggressor by the owner who had called was unconscious and unresponsive. Realizing that he was not breathing and had no pulse, I immediately began life saving CPR and requested an ambulance with haste. I was able to regain a working pulse as EMS arrived and took him to the hospital. The commanding officer, Captain Pinkhasov, awarded me the commendation, "Officer of the month," and thanked me for my actions.

In May of 2015 I was returning to work from maternity leave. Having worked the night shift my entire career in Brooklyn with a long commute and extremely young children was difficult. My partner, also a police officer, and I had opposing schedules which meant I often had little to no help as I struggled to balance motherhood and career. I requested and was approved to transfer to the 105 precinct where my commute was drastically better and I was able to work a daytime shift which worked better for my family.

While coming to the 105 was a drastic change, not all of it was for the better. I found myself relearning how to do my job on the fly because patrol is substantially different from housing. One of the most challenging things was leaving behind the friendships I had made and starting again in a place where everything and everyone was new. One of the first friendships that I made during this adjustment was Robert Smith. Smith had also, like me, worked in housing and understood how hard the transition could be, our children were around the same age and he often gave me advice or steered me in the right direction when I was unsure about what to do on the job. Smith supported me in every challenge I faced on the job, and became a father -figure to me.

Just over a year after coming to the 105 my family was dealt a devastating blow, my father had suddenly and unexpectedly passed away at the age of 53. This left a huge void in my life and I relied heavily on my NYPD family to get through this difficult and upsetting time. Smith was very helpful to me during this time. I had often told him in the past of how much he

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reminded me of my father. Frequently, when I told him about how my mother needed help with a home repair that I couldn't do on my own, he volunteered to help me fix it. I felt indebted to Smith that he would go out of his way to be so kind to me and my family.

In 2020, when Smith first approached me and asked me to begin steering vehicles from vehicle accidents I was torn. I knew that it was wrong and that it went against my personal morals as well as the ethics of the oath that I had taken as a police officer. I also felt the pressure of turning down my father figure and disappointing someone that I held in high esteem. I understand now that my father figure in the end betrayed me, because my real father would never have encouraged me to go in harm's way.

Knowing that I had recently requested a transfer to a new unit and that it had been approved with a fast approaching transfer date, I decided to accept Smith's proposal, never thinking that the unit would be disbanded prior to my entry and that I would be placing myself in a situation where I would need to follow through with the agreement I had made to steer vehicles.

The man that I had been introduced to for steering vehicles was named Anthony. He had given me 1,500 dollars and a key to a UPS mailbox with the agreement that I would call him to pick up cars after an accident and he would leave 500 dollars for me afterwards. The first time I saw him after the agreement was made was when he showed up to an accident that required a vehicle tow without me having called him there which was not per the arrangement he had explained to me. I felt anxious but allowed him to remove the vehicle as I could see no way to back out at that time.

Moving forward I tried to think of a way to ease out of the scam and eventually told him in sum that I thought it was risky and that I felt I was being watched by my coworkers. Anthony also said during that conversation that there was a lot going on in the news about a police officer who was being investigated and agreed it would be best to stop steering vehicles to him. After this discussion I had thought that the incident was behind me with no intention of my further involvement. At one point prior to that conversation Anthony had tried to convince me to recruit other police officers to steer him vehicles and I had refused.

I felt then and still feel an immense amount of guilt. I think constantly about the stupidity of my decision and the betrayal I feel that I have made not just to the NYPD but also to my family. I feel an immense amount of shame and regret for the profoundly poor choices that I made and recognize that I alone am responsible for making them. I recognize that I have violated my oath as a police officer and tarnished the shield I wore as well as undermined the work of all police officers. I have brought disgrace to my family and hurt them personally and financially.

To say that my children are my life would be an understatement. They are more important to me than words can describe. My son [REDACTED] loves looking up from his soccer games to see me cheering for him. He tells me every night when I tuck him into bed that I'm his best friend. He struggles with attention issues and requires constant assistance with tasks like homework and staying on task. My daughter [REDACTED] is sensitive and sweet. She loves to practice her dance recital moves together and she can't fall asleep unless we have snuggled up to read a chapter from Harry Potter together. My single greatest fear is that my children will need me and that I won't be there to help them with homework or comfort them when they are sad. That they will look for me and I won't be there for them.

Please consider all of this. I am a good person, but I had a horrible lapse of judgement. Be assured that I accept full responsibility, and will pay my debt to society for my criminal conduct, and eventually move forward to be a productive and better member of society.

Respectfully,

Heather Busch